words, the length of a code word which is assigned to a spectral value generally being that much shorter the higher the probability of occurrence of the spectral value is;

(c) a unit for determining a raster for the coded bit stream where the raster has equidistant raster points (10, 12, 14) and where the separation (D1) of the raster points depends on the code table; and

(d) a unit for positioning priority code words, which represent particular spectral values which are psychoacoustically important compared to other spectral values, in the raster so that the start of each priority code word coincides with a raster point.

22. A device for coding an audio signal to obtain a coded bit stream, comprising:

(a) a unit for transforming discrete-time samples of the audio signal into the frequency domain to obtain spectral values which represent the audio signal;

(b) a unit for grouping the spectral values into adjacent spectral sections, each spectral section having at least one spectral value;

(c) a unit for assigning at least two different code tables from a predetermined number of code tables to two different spectral sections, a spectral section having assigned to it that code table which is best suited for coding the spectral values in the spectral section;

(d) a unit for coding the spectral values from the spectral sections with the code table which is assigned to the corresponding spectral section, the length of a code word which is assigned to a spectral value being in general that much shorter the higher the probability of occurrence of the spectral value is;

(e) a unit for specifying a raster for the coded bit stream such that the raster has at least two groups of raster points (10, 12, 14 and 14, 16, 18), such that the raster points of each group are spaced equidistantly from one another and such that the raster point distance (D1 or D2) of each group depends on an appropriate code table from among the at least two different code tables; and

(f) a unit for positioning priority code words, which represent certain spectral values which are psychoacoustically important compared to other spectral values, in the raster so that the start of each priority code word of each code table coincides with a raster point (10, 12, 14 or 14, 16, 18) in the corresponding group of raster points.

23. A method for decoding a bit stream representing a coded audio signal, where the coded bit stream contains code words of different lengths from a code table and has a raster with equidistant raster points (10, 12, 14), where the code words include priority code words, which represent particular spectral values which are psychoacoustically important compared to other spectral values, and where priority code words are aligned with raster points, comprising the following steps:

(a) detecting the distance (D1) between two adjacent raster points;

(b) resorting the priority code words, which are aligned with the raster points, in the coded bit stream in such a way as to obtain a linear arrangement of the same with frequency, the start of a priority code word coinciding with a raster point;

(c) decoding the priority code words with an associated code table to obtain decoded spectral values; and

(d) transforming the decoded spectral values back into the time domain to obtain a decoded audio signal.

24. A method for decoding a bit stream representing a coded audio signal, where the coded bit stream contains code words of different lengths from at least two code tables and has a raster with at least two groups of equidistant raster points (10, 12, 14 and 14, 16, 18), where the code words include priority code words, which represent particular spectral values which are psychoacoustically important compared to other spectral values, and where priority code words are aligned with raster points, comprising the following steps:

(a) detecting the distance (D1, D2) between two adjacent raster points;

(b) resorting the priority code words, which are aligned with the raster points, in the coded bit stream in such a way as to obtain a linear arrangement of the same with frequency, the start of a priority code word coinciding with a raster point;